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Colleges go back to drawing board — again — to fight COVID

Students walk on the Stanford University campus in Stanford, Calif, March 14, 2019.

Associated Press
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Colleges go back to drawing board — again — to fight COVID

From Front

AP Education Writer

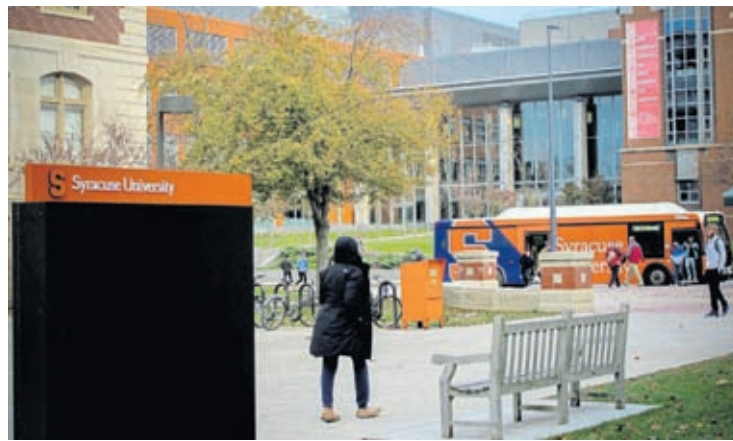
Facing rising infections and a new COVID-19 variant, colleges across the U.S. have once again been thwarted in seeking a move to normalcy and are starting to require booster shots, extend mask mandates, limit social gatherings and, in some cases, revert to on-line classes.

The threat of the omicron variant comes as a gut punch to schools that were hoping to relax safety measures this spring. Now, many are telling students to prepare for another term of masking, testing and, if cases get bad, limits around social life.

Cornell University shut down all campus activities on Tuesday and moved final exams online after more than 700 students tested positive over three days. In a campus message, President Martha Pollack said there was evidence of the omicron variant in a "significant" number of samples.

"It is obviously extremely dispiriting to have to take these steps," Pollack wrote. "However, since the start of the pandemic, our commitment has been to follow the science and do all we can to protect the health of our faculty, staff and students. Hours later, Princeton University moved its exams online and urged students to leave campus 'at their earliest convenience' amid a rise in cases. On Wednesday, New York University canceled all non-academic events and encouraged professors to move finals online.

Cornell, Princeton and NYU all report student vaccination rates of more than 98%. After a fall with few coronavirus cases, officials at Syracuse University were



Students walk the campus on Syracuse University, Nov. 21, 2019, in New York.

Associated Press

"feeling pretty good" about the spring term, said Kent Syverud, the upstate New York school's chancellor.

"But omicron has changed that," Syverud said. "It has made us go back and say, until we know more about this variant for sure, we're going to have to reinstate some precautions."

Last week, Syracuse announced that all eligible students and employees must get COVID-19 booster shots before the spring term. Students will also face a round of virus tests when they return, and officials are weighing whether to extend an existing mask mandate.

Much is still unknown about the omicron variant and how big of a threat it poses. In the United States and many other nations, the delta variant is currently responsible for most COVID-19 cases.

But as colleges brace for the worst, many see boosters as their best hope. More than 20 colleges have issued booster shot requirements in recent weeks, and others say they're thinking about it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is encouraging boosters for people ages 17 and older, and Pfizer last week announced that a booster of its COVID-19

vaccine might offer important protection against omicron even though the initial two doses appear less effective.

Hundreds of colleges already require COVID-19 vaccines, and some say boosters are an obvious next step.

Most booster mandates so far have come from small liberal arts colleges in the Northeast, but the list includes some as big as Boston University and NYU, and as far away as the University of Notre Dame in Indiana and the University of New Mexico.

The University of Massachusetts in Amherst was among the first to require the booster for students, saying all students must get shots unless they have medical or religious exemptions.

"The boosters are our best protection," said Jeffrey Hescok, co-director of the university's Public Health Promotion Center. "This demonstrates that we take public health seriously, and our students do too."

A recent online petition arguing against the booster mandate — citing 97% of students vaccinated and few on-campus cases — has attracted a few dozen signatures. But Emily O'Brien, a freshman at UMass, said the booster shot is a rea-

sonable demand. She was already planning on getting a booster but said the mandate will probably increase uptake among students and prevent future lockdowns. "If the past six months have shown anything, it's that lots of people won't bother to get vaccines — especially younger healthy people — if they don't have a requirement to," said O'Brien, 18, of Bedford, New Hampshire.

UMass will also require masks at the start of spring term, and it's sending students home with a rapid test to be taken near the end of winter break.

Many colleges are planning for potential disruption next semester even as they contend with outbreaks now. Middlebury College in Vermont switched to remote instruction last week amid a surge in cases and urged students to leave early for winter break. Rising cases at the University of Pennsylvania led to a ban on indoor social events last Thursday.

On Friday, Tulane University in New Orleans warned that a campus spike includes probable cases of the omicron variant, confirmed in at least one student last week. In response, school officials reinstated a mask mandate and expanded virus testing.

Some other schools are already postponing the return to campus next month to avoid outbreaks. Southern New Hampshire University and DePaul University in Chicago recently said students will take classes remotely for two weeks before returning to campus after the holidays.

In a letter to students, DePaul's president, A. Gabriel Esteban, said the school will "cautiously start winter quarter so we can sustain a

robust college experience the remainder of the academic year."

When students at Stanford University return to campus in January, they will be barred from holding parties or other big gatherings for two weeks. They'll also be tested once a week and continue to wear masks indoors as requirements to attend in-person classes. The measures aim to limit virus transmission without going too far in limiting the college experience, said Russell Furr, associate vice provost for environmental health and safety.

"This is something we've grappled with throughout the pandemic — how do we get a balanced approach?" Furr said. The goal is to avoid the strict lockdowns seen early in the pandemic, when student mental health "really suffered," he added.

At some colleges, there's still cautious hope for a normal semester. Leaders at the University of Central Florida told professors they can require in-person attendance in the spring, which had been discouraged this fall amid a surge in delta cases.

In a campus message, interim provost Michael D. Johnson warned that if the omicron variant takes off, "we may need to change direction yet again."

Another concern is omicron's timing — even without a new variant, there were worries of more outbreaks as colder weather drives people indoors, said Anita Barkin, co-chair of a COVID-19 task force for the American College Health Association.

The association recently recommended that colleges focus on increasing vaccination rates to avoid a new wave of cases. □

Telehealth helps in pandemic, concerns linger: AP-NORC poll

By **TOM MURPHY** and
EMILY SWANSON

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most older Americans have had to use telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic and many were comfortable with it, but a new poll finds persistent concerns about issues like technology, the quality of care and patient privacy.

Comfort levels with remote care can vary depending on factors like age, income level or race, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Doctors, hospitals and other care providers had to cancel visits and surgeries and abruptly switch to remote care as the pandemic unfolded in early 2020. Many patients followed their doctors online and have continued to get care that way as coronavirus cases ebbed and flowed in subsequent waves.

Telehealth involves patients and care providers connecting remotely through computers, tablets or phones. They often use video calls but also can trade emails or secure text messages. Sometimes both parties just talk on the phone without video.

Since the pandemic started, 62% of adults age 50 and older have used some form of telehealth, the AP-NORC poll found.



Medical director of Doctor on Demand Dr. Vibin Roy prepares to conduct an online visit with a patient from his work station at home, April 23, 2021, in Keller, Texas.

Associated Press

Patients most frequently used telehealth for consultations on medications, non-urgent health concerns, wellness checks or to continue with ongoing care to manage a chronic condition like diabetes. The ease of finding an appointment or meeting a specific provider and the chance to get an immediate response were the most common reasons respondents opted for telehealth. Roughly a third said each was a major factor and another third called them minor factors.

A majority also cited avoiding COVID-19 exposure as

a major or minor reason for seeking care through telehealth, with about a quarter calling it a major reason. Rosa Bivens became a remote care convert during the pandemic partly because it helped her avoid the virus.

The 59-year-old Bivens also likes how telehealth allows her to stay connected to her doctor in Maryland while she's on a temporary work assignment in Germany. Bivens is a military family life counselor, and she says her doctor back home understands the stress she faces in her job and how it affects her health.

"That personal relationship is important to me," she said.

The poll found that those who received care through telehealth were generally comfortable with it. Roughly 6 in 10 said they were at least somewhat likely to seek such remote care after the pandemic ends.

But many concerns remain. Chief among them is worry about receiving care that is not as effective as an in-person visit. Roughly two-thirds of older adults said they were at least somewhat concerned with that. Many also have some worry about not having a

personal relationship with a doctor, running into information security or technical problems and a lack of privacy.

Judy Ostrom, for instance, didn't use remote care during the pandemic and has no plans to start.

"You don't know who's walking in and out of the room where the doctor is," the 60-year-old resident of La Pine, Oregon, said. "I love my family, but sometimes you want your conversation with your doctor to be confidential."

Some concerns were more concentrated among adults age 65 and older. For example, those patients were more worried about not having a personal relationship with their doctor and not having the appropriate devices compared with people ages 50 to 64.

Debra Nanez, 69, of Tucson, Arizona, said she sticks to audio-only telephone calls with her doctors when she does telehealth. The retired nurse worries about the security of any health information she'd have to enter into a website to do other forms of telehealth.

She also doesn't have a reliable way to do a video call. "Sometimes my phone acts funny; it will work and then suddenly the phone will turn off," she said. "That's why I'll just do it telephonically. I have no problems with it." □

Deadline time for HealthCare.gov coverage that starts Jan. 1

By **R. ALONSO-ZALDIVAR**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumers seeking government-subsidized health insurance for next year have through Wednesday to sign up if they want their new plan to start Jan. 1.

Independent experts say HealthCare.gov's sign-up season doesn't seem to be drawing as many new customers this year — 8% to 9% fewer than last year — but it's too early to draw final conclusions because deadlines drive much of the enrollment.

Open enrollment for the Affordable Care Act is different this time because it's an early test of President Joe Biden's idea that the U.S. can get close to coverage for all by building on existing programs.

Wednesday is the first of two deadlines for HealthCare.gov coverage, with increased financial assistance available through Biden's coronavirus relief legislation. The last chance will come Jan. 15, for coverage that takes effect Feb. 1.

People who are already

enrolled don't have to do anything. If they're satisfied with their current plan, they will be automatically renewed for 2022. HealthCare.gov and its state-run counterparts are insurance marketplaces that offer taxpayer-subsidized private coverage.

About 91% of U.S. residents currently have health insurance through a mix of employer, public and individual plans, but 28 million people remain uninsured even in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most would be eligible for



The healthcare.gov website is seen, Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021 in Fort Washington, Md.

Associated Press

taxpayer-subsidized coverage, and surveys show many are just not aware of that.

Experts following sign-up season say new enrollments are running somewhat be-

hind last year's numbers in the 33 states served by the federal HealthCare.gov website. The remaining states and Washington, D.C., run their own enrollment campaigns. □

Mexican woman shot in head by U.S. Border Patrol files claim

By ANITA SNOW

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Attorneys for a Mexican woman who was shot in the head by a Border Patrol agent and survived announced Wednesday that they filed a claim against the U.S. government as a precursor to a federal lawsuit.

The claim filed with the Border Patrol by Marisol García Alcántara, who had arrived in the U.S. shortly before the shooting over the summer in Nogales, Arizona, is necessary before a civil action is filed next year with the U.S. District Court in Tucson. "I want to know why, why did they do that and why me?" García, 37, said in an interview last week from her family home outside Mexico City.

"I am looking for justice. I want an apology from that person and help for medical care and medicine because I can't work," she said.

The bullet entered García's head above her left eye and fragments still remain in her brain, putting her at risk of seizures. She said that a half-year later she still suffers from loss of memory, dizzy spells and headaches. Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the Border Patrol, said the



Marisol García Alcántara points to the scar on her forehead from a bullet wound during an interview at her home in the municipality of La Paz, Mexico state, Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021.

Associated Press

agency could not comment because the shooting was still being investigated internally by its Office of Professional Responsibility. It will also be reviewed by the CBP's National Use of Force Review Board.

The agent's identity has not been revealed.

García's legal team have said the Border Patrol is not in a position to impartially investigate the June 16 shooting. They point to longstanding concerns over Border Patrol units known as Critical Incident

Teams, which collect information about agents' use of force.

Detractors call them "shadow units" that may impede investigations into whether agents' actions are justified.

Attorney Eugene Iredale, who is representing García, called the teams "the administrative equivalent of an anti-internal affairs squad designed to protect the agency" from liability.

The Southern Border Communities Coalition, a non-profit advocacy group, on

Wednesday reiterated calls for a congressional investigation into the shooting and the Critical Incident Teams.

"This incident is not unique," said Rep. Raul Grijalva, a Democrat who represents southern Arizona and supports such an inquiry. "This is a pattern that needs to be dealt with."

CBP said the Critical Incident Teams do not lead investigations, but rather collect evidence for other agencies, in this case under the direction and su-

pervision of the FBI.

García said American officials never asked her about the shooting.

"No one investigated," she said. "I returned to Mexico without making a declaration."

García said she had gone to the U.S. to visit her mother and look for work to support her three daughters. Shortly after arriving in the U.S., she was among a group of people riding in a SUV in the border city of Nogales, Arizona, sitting behind the driver. She heard a siren, felt pain in her head, and her vision blurred while people in the vehicle tended to her wound.

She was rushed to a nearby hospital then flown by helicopter to another one in Phoenix where she had surgery that night. García said after two days in Phoenix, she was taken to a detention center for several weeks until she was sent back to Mexico.

The announcement of the claim comes just days after Chris Magnus, the reform-minded Tucson police chief, was sworn in as CBP commissioner. Magnus updated Tucson's use-of-force policies and made many other changes during his time with the department. □



A female grizzly eyes her new habitat in the Cabinet Mountains of western Montana as she leaves a culvert trap on Oct. 2, 2005.

Associated Press

By MATTHEW BROWN

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Montana wildlife officials on Tuesday advanced plans that could allow grizzly bear hunting in areas around Glacier and Yel-

lowstone national parks, if states in the U.S. northern Rockies succeed in their attempts to lift federal protections for the animals.

Grizzlies in the region have been protected as a threatened species since

Montana advances grizzly bear plans that could allow hunting

1975 and were shielded from hunting for most of that time.

Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte last month announced the state intends to petition the Biden administration to lift threatened species protections for Glacier-area grizzlies. Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon is leading a similar push to end protections for Yellowstone area bears. The two regions have the most bears in the U.S. outside Alaska, the only state that currently allows hunting. As officials seek to make the case that protections are no longer needed, Montana wildlife commissioners voted to sign onto a multistate plan to maintain

more than 900 bears in the Yellowstone area. Wyoming already has signed onto the plan, which would allow limited hunting. Idaho officials are expected to consider it next month.

Montana commissioners also gave preliminary approval to revisions to Glacier-area bear population targets that could allow hunting of grizzlies in northwestern portions of the state if federal protections end. The rule calls for maintaining a population of more than 800 bears.

Details on any future hunting seasons would be established at a later date. Wildlife advocates have objected to the bid to lift

protections, saying state officials in the northern Rockies are intent on driving down populations of grizzlies and another predator, gray wolves.

But state officials — backed by livestock and hunting groups — say bear populations need to be more closely controlled. They cite increasing conflicts between bears and humans, including attacks on livestock and occasional maulings of people.

The last grizzly hunts in the U.S. outside Alaska were in the early 1990s, under an exemption to protections that allowed 14 bears to be killed each fall in Montana. □

New Dutch coalition vows to spend big on broad reforms

By **MIKE CORDER**

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The leaders of four political parties set to join forces in the next Dutch ruling coalition pledged Wednesday to tackle thorny problems including climate change and housing shortages and to strengthen education and a health care system that has been stretched almost to breaking point by the COVID-19 pandemic.

They also vowed to work to win back public trust in government and politics that has been eroded by scandals, polarization, frustration in parts of society at measures to tackle the pandemic and at the nine months it took parties to reach the coalition accord following a March 17 election.

Caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who is now set to begin a fourth term in office early next year, said the coalition would seek to work together with "society and with our political colleagues" in parliament to implement reforms. The plans that include tax cuts, almost free child care



In this file photo dated Friday, April 2, 2021, caretaker Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte leaves after surviving a no-confidence motion in parliament in The Hague, Netherlands.

Associated Press

for working parents, a return of grants for higher education students, labor market reforms and a plan to build about 100,000 new homes each year, will cost billions in this country long known for its fiscal frugality.

The policies were outlined in a 47-page document titled "Looking after each other, looking forward to the future."

One of its key goals is tackling the climate crisis and pollution emissions, including the ambition to cut carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030 on the way to becoming climate neutral by 2050.

As part of the climate policy, the coalition said it would set up a 35-billion euro (\$39 billion) climate and energy transition fund

for the coming decade, appoint a minister for climate and energy and put in motion steps for the construction of two new nuclear power stations as well as stimulating renewable energy production.

Climate group Greenpeace welcomed parts of the plan, but said more was needed, including concrete measures to cut car-

bon emissions. It said it was "disappointed to see the emphasis on nuclear energy," but voiced skepticism about whether the nuclear plan would materialize.

The coalition parties also pledged to invest in all levels of the education system, tackle inequalities and intolerance in society and to fight organized crime amid fears about the growing power of drug gangs. The issue was thrown into sharp relief over the summer with the slaying of well-known campaigning reporter Peter R. De Vries on an Amsterdam street.

While the parties pledged to invest in higher salaries for health care workers, opposition parties slammed them for what they called cuts in the long-term health budget.

On foreign policy, the coalition said it will work for a "more decisive, economically stronger, greener and safer" European Union with more transparent decision making. It also wants to promote international cooperation, strengthen the trans-Atlantic alliance and tackle international espionage. □

Greenpeace: Greek gas hunt an 'unbearable' threat to whales

By **NICHOLAS PAPHITIS**

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greenpeace on Wednesday renewed calls against proposed deep-sea oil and gas exploration off southwest Greece, warning of "unbearable" consequences to endangered Mediterranean whales and dolphins.

Greenpeace Greece official Kostis Grimanis said the project should be scrapped before "it starts to wreck the Mediterranean."

The appeal came as the environmental group published new research on sea mammal populations in parts of the miles-deep Hellenic Trench, including areas that would be affected by prospecting.

The three-week summer project, in cooperation with the Athens-based Pelagos Cetacean Research Insti-

tute, detected 35 endangered sperm whales and dozens of dolphins some threatened in depths of up to 4,200 meters (13,800 feet).

Greenpeace said sound-sensitive cetaceans whales and dolphins would be at risk from the deafening sonic blasts used in undersea prospecting. Greek officials counter that strict environmental safeguards will be observed.

In 2019, Greece granted exploration rights for two blocks of seabed south and southwest of the island of Crete to a consortium of energy companies TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil with Greece's Hellenic Petroleum. Environmentalists had protested at the time, also highlighting the potential risk of spills from deep-water drilling. Prospecting has not yet started, and

it's unclear when it will although the concession states that it must be in the winter, to less impact cetacean breeding periods.

Greenpeace's Grimanis said the project means "exposing endangered species and crucial ecosystems to unbearable noise and pollution from seismic blasts and deep-sea drilling operations." "And for what? To keep burning oil and gas, one of the dirtiest and most expensive energy sources, when the climate crisis demands we urgently walk away from them."

The Hellenic Trench includes the Mediterranean's deepest waters, at 5,267 meters (17,300 feet) and is a vital habitat for the sea's few hundred sperm whales, and for other cetaceans already threatened by fishing, collisions with ships and plastic pollution.

These mammals are particularly sensitive to the underwater noise produced by seismic surveys for fossil fuels, in which sound waves are bounced off the seabed to locate potential deposits. Sonar used by warships has been shown to have deadly effects on whales, and experts say seismic surveys can do the

same.

Greece is hoping to raise revenues and achieve greater energy security through offshore oil and gas, and the issue of under-sea exploitation rights has further poisoned relations with neighboring Turkey which claims large parts of the Eastern Mediterranean as its own. □



In this handout photo provided by Greenpeace, whales are seen southwest of Crete island, Greece, on Friday, Sept. 10, 2021.

Associated Press

Kremlin: Xi supports Putin's pursuit of guarantees from West

By DASHA LITVINOVA

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping supported Russian President Vladimir Putin in his push to get Western security guarantees precluding NATO's eastward expansion, the Kremlin said Wednesday after the two leaders held a virtual summit.

Putin and Xi spoke as Moscow faces heightened tensions with the West over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine's border. In recent weeks, Western nations engaged in diplomatic efforts to prevent a possible invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin has denied harboring plans to storm its neighbor.

Putin, meanwhile, demanded guarantees that NATO will not expand to Ukraine or deploy troops and weapons there.

He told Xi on Wednesday about "mounting threats to Russia's national interests from the U.S. and the NATO bloc, which consistently move their military infrastructure close to the Russian borders," Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said.

The Russian leader stressed the need to hold talks with NATO and the U.S. on le-



Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures during his videoconference with Chinese President Xi Jinping, right on the screen, in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021.

Associated Press

gally binding security guarantees, according to Ushakov. Xi responded by saying he "understands Russia's concerns and fully supports our initiative to work out these security guarantees for Russia," Ushakov said.

He said Moscow's proposals have been passed on to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried, who visited Moscow on Wednesday and met with Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov.

In recent years, China and Russia have increasingly aligned their foreign policies to counter U.S. domination of the international economic and political order.

Both have faced sanctions China over its abuses against minorities, especially Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, and for its crack-down on the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and Russia for annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and over

the poisoning and imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Beijing and Washington also remain at odds over trade, technology and China's military intimidation of Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory.

Russia's relations with the U.S. sank to post-Cold War lows after it annexed Crimea and threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in Ukraine's east. Tensions reignited in recent weeks after Moscow

massed tens of thousands of troops near Ukraine's border, a move Ukraine and the West feared may indicate plans for a new invasion.

Moscow has denied that it plans to attack Ukraine and in turn blamed Ukraine for its own military buildup in the country's war-torn east. Russian officials alleged that Kyiv might try to reclaim the areas controlled by the rebels.

It is within that context that Putin has pressed the West for guarantees that NATO will not expand to Ukraine or deploy its forces there.

During their call on Wednesday, Putin and Xi hailed relations between Russia and China, with the Russian leader saying they are based on "such principles as not interfering in internal affairs (of each other), respect for each other's interests, determination to turn the shared border into a belt of eternal peace and good neighborliness."

Xi said, through a translator, that he appreciated that Putin "strongly supported China's efforts to protect key national interests and firmly opposed attempts to drive a wedge between our countries." □

FAO: Virus hits Asian food security, as millions go hungry



People wait for free food outside an eatery in Ahmedabad, India, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

By ELAINE KURTENBACH

AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The prolonged pandemic and surging prices are undermining food security for millions of people in Asia, with 1.8 billion lacking access to healthy diets, a report

by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said Wednesday.

The report says access to food worsened in 2020 and deteriorated further this year as governments struggled to keep outbreaks at bay by restricting travel

and other activities. With progress toward alleviating hunger stalling, the FAO is urging comprehensive measures to improve food security, part of a push toward what experts call a "food systems" approach. David Dawe, senior economist at the FAO's regional office for Asia and the Pacific, said the organization's food price index rose by nearly a third in the past year. The price of vegetable oils, which are critical for health, soared 74%, he said. Rising global commodity prices affect the costs for consumers, in "another blow to the poor, who spend a large percentage of their income on food and are struggling to recover from the impacts of COVID-19," Dawe said.

"Food producers have

also faced more recent challenges after the initial impact of the pandemic including rising fuel and fertilizer prices," he said.

A transformation of systems to improve food security needs to revolve around the needs of the many small-scale farmers in the region and other vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, women and children, the FAO report says. It notes that nearly 16% of people in South Asia are undernourished and that for the region as a whole undernourishment is at its highest level in a decade, at 8.7%.

Access to adequate food is worst in North Korea, with more than 40% of its people undernourished. But hunger is an urgent problem also in Afghanistan, Papua New

Guinea and East Timor.

Conditions across the region are still better than they were in 2000, but progress in recent years has slowed and in some cases reversed. In 10 countries in the region, more than 30% of children under 5 years old suffer from stunting, or low height for age a common measure for how well fed they are. In another eight countries, between 20%-30% do.

Millions among those children suffer from wasting, a potentially more dangerous condition due to inadequate food or prolonged illness. In 2020, more than 31 million children in the Asia-Pacific were affected by wasting, and that number could rise to 40 million by the end of 2022 if current trends continue. □



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Chile sees migrant crossings rise ahead of presidential vote

By **MATÍAS DELACROIX and PATRICIA LUNA**

Associated Press

COLCHANE, Chile (AP) —

A merciless sun seared the migrants as they walked through one of the driest places in the world, trying to illegally cross the border from Bolivia into Chile fearing it might soon be closed. It has become common in recent months to see migrants trudging across the Atacama Desert but the flow appears to have increased in recent days ahead of Chile's presidential runoff Sunday. The migrants fear that if far-right candidate José Antonio Kast wins he will close the border as he promised during his campaign.

The conservative lawmaker, who has defended Chile's military dictatorship,



Migrants walk on the field after crossing into Chile from the Bolivian border near Colchane, Chile, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021.

finished first in the country's presidential election in November but did not get enough votes to win outright setting up a runoff against leftist Gabriel Boric. Kast has said he will order a

ditch to be built to prevent migrants from crossing from Bolivia.

Immigration has been a recurring topic in Chile's presidential campaign as the

country sees an increasing flow of migrants, mainly from Venezuela, but also from nations like Haiti and Colombia. It's a divisive issue and recently there was

a widely publicized case of Chileans attacking Venezuelan migrants in Iquique, near the border with Bolivia and Peru.

The U.N. International Organization for Migration estimates there are almost 1.7 million immigrants in Chile. Only this year, Chilean authorities have registered more than 25,000 people arriving through the Atacama Desert, a significant increase compared to the 16,500 for all 2020.

"We have relatives here in Chile who told us that we had to go before Dec. 19, because if the one who won the first round (Kast) wins again, he will close all borders," said Rayber Rodríguez, a Venezuelan traveling with his wife and daughter. □

Associated Press

U.S. Navy fires laser weapon in Mideast amid drone boat threat

By **JON GAMBRELL**

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. Navy announced Wednesday it tested a laser weapon and destroyed a floating target in the Mideast, a system that could be used to counter bomb-laden drone boats deployed by Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

The test Tuesday saw the USS Portland test-fire its Laser Weapon System Demonstrator at the target in the Gulf of Aden, the body of water separating East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

The Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet described the laser as having "successfully engaged" the target in a statement. Previously, the Portland used the laser to bring down a flying drone in May 2020.

The Gulf of Aden sits along the southern coast of war-torn Yemen, which has been at war since Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized its capital, Sanaa, in 2014. A Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict in March 2015 but the stalemate conflict has dragged on for years, becoming the world's worst humanitarian disaster and killing an estimated 110,000 people.

The war also has bled into the surrounding waterways, like the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb, which connects the sea to the Gulf of Aden. □

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EAGLE BEACH — Manchebo Beach Hotel officially opened its doors on December 15, 1966 as Aruba's newest tourism development on the beautiful shores of Aruba. The hotel developed by ALM pilots Mense and Fokker-Hamminga was the first of its kind on the Manchebo/Eagle Beach area. Aruba's tourism was thriving well at the time with the Aruba Caribbean Hotel and the Sheraton on Palm Beach and the Talk of the Town Hotel in Oranjestad among others.

In 1970 Ike Cohen became one of the major shareholders and started managing the hotel. At the time Ike Cohen and his family were already running the Talk of the Town Hotel in Oranjestad as well the famous Talk of the Town Restaurant. Ike Cohen went to work at the Manchebo and turned the hotel to a higher level. Affiliated with the Best Western brand the Manchebo Beach Hotel built up a loyal clientele of repeat visitors over the years all looking for a tranquil and casual beach getaway.

Ike Cohen was a successful businessman and one of the co-founders of the Aruba Hotel Association. In 1978 Ike Cohen received the first ever "Hotelier of the Year Award" of the Caribbean Hotel Association. Later, the Queen of The Netherlands knighted Ike in honor of his leadership in establishing tourism as a valuable economic resource for the island. Ike Cohen passed away at age 96 on September 23, 2007. On February 11, 2016 the Government of Aruba unveiled the "Ike Cohen Monument" at Plaza Turismo located just opposite the Talk of the Town Hotel. A monument dedicated to Aruba's many successful tourism pioneers.

Rejuvenation of the resort started in 2003 when Ike Cohen appointed the current resort general manager Edgar Roelofs. Together with company director Bill Crona the wellness concept was introduced with the opening of Spa del Sol. This exotic Caribbean-Balinese outdoor spa oasis designed and managed by the late Fred Abspoel opened its doors in 2004 and set the tone for years to come.

A full resort renovation commenced in 2009 which included the 72 resort rooms, restaurants, bars, beach pavilion and public areas resulting in a successful 4-star boutique wellness resort. The pool-side restaurant was turned into a fine dining venue in 2012 and named after its legendary owner "Ike's Bistro" as a tribute for his passion for the culinary.

The resort has always been a favorite with honeymooners from North America and Europe. However the first honeymoon couple to ever stay at the resort was Glen and Aurora Carvahal from Aruba. Married on December 27, 1966 the couple spent their honeymoon at the Manchebo Beach Hotel.

Today Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is Aruba's leading wellness resort offering daily yoga and Pilates classes, Spa del

Sol, a fitness room and of course a health focused culinary menu in the resort restaurants. In the morning expect home-made granola, steel-cut oatmeal and fresh fruit smoothies to start off the day. Longtime guests mingle with a new generation of wellness-conscious travelers who are drawn to this intimate ocean-front oasis as much for its setting as its thoughtful grasp of island culture and cuisine and modern-day services and amenities.

A Change of Ownership

On Monday, November 15th, 2021, The Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa enjoyed a smooth transition into a change of ownership as its acquisition was formally concluded and signed, welcoming the Molo Hotel Group to Aruba.

In early 2020, just before the pandemic, the Slominski family vacationed in Aruba. Originally from Poland, the family formed a dynamic owner-operator hotel company in 2017. It was on the lookout for opportunities in Aruba, to help build its portfolio of high-quality resorts in great locations, around the globe. According to son Lukasz Slominski, the Chairman of Molo Holding, he took a stroll down the beach with his parents, starting at the hotel where they were staying, and casually stopped at the Manchebo Beach Resort for a drink. The three Slominskis fell in love with the beach, and the location, shared their findings with other family members, and together decided to make an offer, adding Aruba to their list of Molo Hotels great locations. They contacted Bill Crona, and while the resort was not for immediate sale, in consultation with the Cohen siblings Tommy, Ree and Yvonne, who have been involved with the property from the start, for 50 years, the idea to place the Manchebo in the hands of a family-held company, became very attractive. The Slominski's expressed the desire to take the resort over, including all staffers and members of management, to continue doing what it does, maintaining the spirit of the original concept for the coming years, until an eventual expansion.

The signing took place by: Grete 'Ree' Case, William 'Bill' Crona, Lukasz & Kate Slominski – he is Chairman of Molo Holding, brother Marcin & wife Justyna Slominski, Eugeniusz & Gabriela Slominski – parents of the four Slominski siblings, and Edgar Roelofs, resort general manager. What truly has made Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa a home away for so many customers over the years are their friendly and dedicated resort employees. It is like coming home for so many of their guests. It's the Manchebo team that makes the customer experience the One Happy Island experience that it is until today!

Congratulations to all employees, staff members and loyal customers of Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa! □

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa celebrating 55 years!



NOS TA GRADICI
Y FELICITA

Manchebo Beach

Resort & Spa Aruba

pa e contribucion na
nos desaroyo turistico

Dunando Aruba e miho
di nan mes pa 55 aña caba

Masha Pabien!

Papillon: the butterfly effect of magnificent food

PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambience, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. She points out that all Covid-protocol is in place here, they are very keen on hygiene and offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with social distancing in place and right on the high-rise strip.

Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck



Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Chef’s Sunday

Tina: “Every Sunday Papillon offers you an exquisite meal option: a 4 -course



Chef’s Menu with wine pairing for \$100 per person. With regards to the man in the kitchen we have the best of the best: chef Martijn Liebrechts from The Netherlands. He has earned his spurs among others in Amber; one of the best French fine dining restaurant’s Hong Kong has to offer, with 2 Michelin- stars and ranked as the 24th best restaurant in the world. Moving back to Amsterdam he joined the team of former Bib Gourmand restaurant “Wilde Zwijnen”, which was awarded the title “The New Dutch Cuisine” by the New York Times. So you see, this is the time to come over and reserve your table.”

Let the music play!

We will give you another reason to visit: twice a week you can enjoy the tunes of live sax player Jairo or the famous Marisela who enchants you with her acoustic performance accompanied by percussion only. Wednesdays chill away on the French lounge tunes of DJ Ibarra and Tuesdays Jose Herrera enchants you with his keyboard talent. The musicians interact with the guests, requests can be send in, the live tunes definitely add to the experience.

Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too.” What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

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Winter storms, COVID: How to make last-minute flight changes

By **SALLY FRENCH**
of **NerdWallet**

Rerouting, rebooking, diverting, you name it. Making last-minute flight changes can be an enormous stressor amid an already stressful holiday travel season.

Hundreds of flights have already been canceled last-minute due to pandemic-related staffing shortages. Perhaps a coronavirus variant surge forces you to cancel your trip. Or what if a winter snowstorm prevents you from taking off? No matter the reason, be prepared for last-minute flight changes or cancellations this year.

FINDING LAST-MINUTE FLIGHTS

If your flight is delayed or canceled, here's how to quickly get on another:

LOOK TO OTHER AIRPORTS

Many major cities are served by multiple airports, so broaden your airport search. John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City might be backed up from a blizzard, but that doesn't necessarily mean nearby airports Newark Liberty International or LaGuardia are out of commission.

And look beyond the major airlines. JSX is a semiprivate jet service, but fares often aren't much more than commercial airfares.

USE BOOKING TOOLS

Even if you're accustomed to booking via an individual airline's website, tools like Google Flights will allow you to quickly compare routes across multiple airlines, nearby airports and selected dates. Booking tools may help surface an available route you'd otherwise miss.

SEARCH FOR ONE-WAY, INDIVIDUAL TICKETS AND DIRECT FLIGHTS

Don't limit your options by searching for round-trip tickets. In a pinch, book a one-way ticket and find the return flight later.

And, if you're traveling with others, rather than searching for group tickets, consider searching for individual ones — especially if your group is comfortable splitting up. If one flight has



Travelers use the self-service kiosk to check in and pay for luggage at the American Airlines terminal, Thursday, April 29, 2021, in Miami.

Associated Press

only four seats left but another flight has two, then a search for your party of six wouldn't show any available tickets. But if some folks are OK being left behind and catching up later, you improve your odds of getting to your destination, period.

Fly direct when possible. If it isn't, try to connect through destinations that are less likely to be affected by bad winter weather (San Diego over Chicago, for example). While the flight with the layover might be cheaper, it might not be worth it if weather issues in the layover city are the reason you can't take off.

HOW TO GET YOUR MONEY BACK

Here are ways to improve your chances of getting a refund for flights interrupted by winter storms or COVID-19:

USE A CREDIT CARD WITH TRAVEL INSURANCE

One of the best ways to get money back for canceled flights (or to get reim-

bursed for additional costs incurred during delays) is booking with a credit card that offers travel insurance. Exact terms vary by card, but you can typically expect coverage for flights affected by severe weather. And usually, this type of insurance will cover not just the flight itself, but ancillary expenses, such as an additional hotel night to take a next-day flight.

PURCHASE TRAVEL INSURANCE

If your credit card doesn't include travel insurance as a benefit, consider purchasing coverage separately. Look closely at the terms and conditions as they vary significantly between plans.

TURN TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology can help you. Many airlines are embracing social media as a customer service tool, and account managers may even be equipped to directly help passengers rebook, issue flight credits and more. If the delay is an airline's

fault, you might get compensation. For example, Southwest Airlines' October 2021 meltdown cost the company \$75 million, according to its third quarter 2021 earnings report. Much of that figure was attributed to customer refunds and "gestures of goodwill," as Southwest offered vouchers to many customers who were affected.

OTHER TIPS FOR TRAVELING DURING WINTER STORM SEASON

— Be prepared to stay longer than you intended. Search budget-friendly lodging near the airport before your trip. If your flight gets delayed and you need to stay an extra night, you don't want to be scrambling to find a room that fits your standards and budget.

— Pack small snacks. Protein bars or nuts are great backups in case you're stuck in an airport overnight and the restaurants and stores are closed.

— Avoid checking lug-

gage. If there's an opportunity to board another last-minute flight, you don't want your luggage packed on a delayed flight to be the one thing holding you back. Carry-on travel allows you to be more nimble. If you do need to check luggage, keep items you can't go without — like phone chargers and medications — with you.

— Set up flight alerts. Check your flight status before leaving for the airport or, better yet, set up automatic flight updates via text alerts. An early alert might help you avoid arriving at the airport for a canceled flight or give you a jump-start on booking a new flight before other passengers.

THE BOTTOM LINE

You might not think the scramble to make a last-minute flight change will happen to you — until it does. And given the challenges of travel this holiday season, you should be more prepared than ever. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Sirius, for one
- 5 Kennel club classification
- 10 Glass section
- 11 Split
- 12 Play start
- 13 Orion, for one
- 14 It may involve lotions
- 16 Apps and such
- 20 Kingly fur
- 23 Clock numeral
- 24 Sounds of suffering
- 25 Try to get, in a way
- 27 Quaint lodgings
- 28 Diamond sides
- 29 The going rate?
- 32 Exposed
- 36 "The Iceman Cometh" author
- 39 Musk of Tesla
- 40 Flower parts
- 41 Map line
- 42 Marsh croakers
- 43 Setting items

DOWN

- 1 Pampering places
- 2 Poster holder
- 3 Opposed to
- 4 Controls
- 5 Say without thinking
- 6 Make fresh
- 7 Put away
- 8 Holiday lead-in
- 9 German article
- 11 Rub the wrong way
- 15 Swindles
- 17 Staff member

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Yesterday's answer

- 18 Mob revolt
- 19 Start of a German count
- 20 Give off
- 21 Writer Jaffe
- 22 Tailless cat
- 25 Poet-singer
- 26 Titanic sinker
- 28 Goes under
- 30 Homer classic
- 31 Niagara sight
- 33 Lotion additive
- 34 Wander
- 35 Cuts off
- 36 Make a choice
- 37 "The Matrix" hero
- 38 Greek vowel

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42						43			

12-16

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

Y I W X D M P R P W P A Y Z D X W S

X I P K Y L Z W X F I M P M F I W

N Z C P Z I P A Y Z D H F L X P W S .

— H F I X Z H F W F O Z S F T

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ONE CAN BE VERY HAPPY WITHOUT DEMANDING THAT OTHERS SHOULD AGREE WITH THEM. GOETHE



Coral grow in a tank at a lab at the University of Hawaii's Institute of Marine Biology in Kaneohe, Hawaii on Friday, Oct. 1, 2021.

Associated Press

Darwin in a lab: Coral evolution tweaked for global warming

By CALEB JONES

Associated Press

COCONUT ISLAND, Hawaii

(AP) — On a moonless summer night in Hawaii, krill, fish and crabs swirl through a beam of light as two researchers peer into the water above a vibrant reef.

Minutes later, like clockwork, they see eggs and sperm from spawning coral drifting past their boat. They scoop up the fishy-smelling blobs and put them in test tubes.

In this Darwinian experiment, the scientists are trying to speed up coral's evolutionary clock to breed "super corals" that can better withstand the impacts of global warming.

For the past five years, the researchers have been conducting experiments to prove their theories would work. Now, they're getting ready to plant laboratory-raised corals in the ocean to see how they survive in nature.

"Assisted evolution started out as this kind of crazy idea that you could actually help something change

and allow that to survive better because it is changing," said Kira Hughes, a University of Hawaii researcher and the project's manager.

SPEEDING UP NATURE

Researchers tested three methods of making corals more resilient:

Selective breeding that carries on desirable traits from parents.

Acclimation that conditions corals to tolerate heat by exposing them to increasing temperatures.

And modifying the algae that give corals essential nutrients.

Hughes said the methods all have proven successful in the lab.

And while some other scientists worried this is meddling with nature, Hughes said the rapidly warming planet leaves no other options. "We have to intervene in order to make a change for coral reefs to survive into the future," she said. When ocean temperatures rise, coral releases its symbiotic algae that supply nutrients and im-

part its vibrant colors. The coral turns white a process called bleaching and can quickly become sick and die.

For more than a decade, scientists have been observing corals that have survived bleaching, even when others have died on the same reef.

So, researchers are focusing on those hardy survivors, hoping to enhance their heat tolerance. And they found selective breeding held the most promise for Hawaii's reefs.

"Corals are threatened worldwide by a lot of stressors, but increasing temperatures are probably the most severe," said Crawford Drury, chief scientist at Hawaii's Coral Resilience Lab. "And so that's what our focus is on, working with parents that are really thermally tolerant."

A NOVEL IDEA

In 2015, Ruth Gates, who launched the resilience lab, and Madeleine van Oppen of the Australian Institute of Marine Science published a paper on assisted evolution during one of the world's worst bleaching events.

The scientists proposed bringing corals into a lab to help them evolve into more heat-tolerant animals. And the idea attracted Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, who funded the first phase of research and whose foundation still supports the program. □

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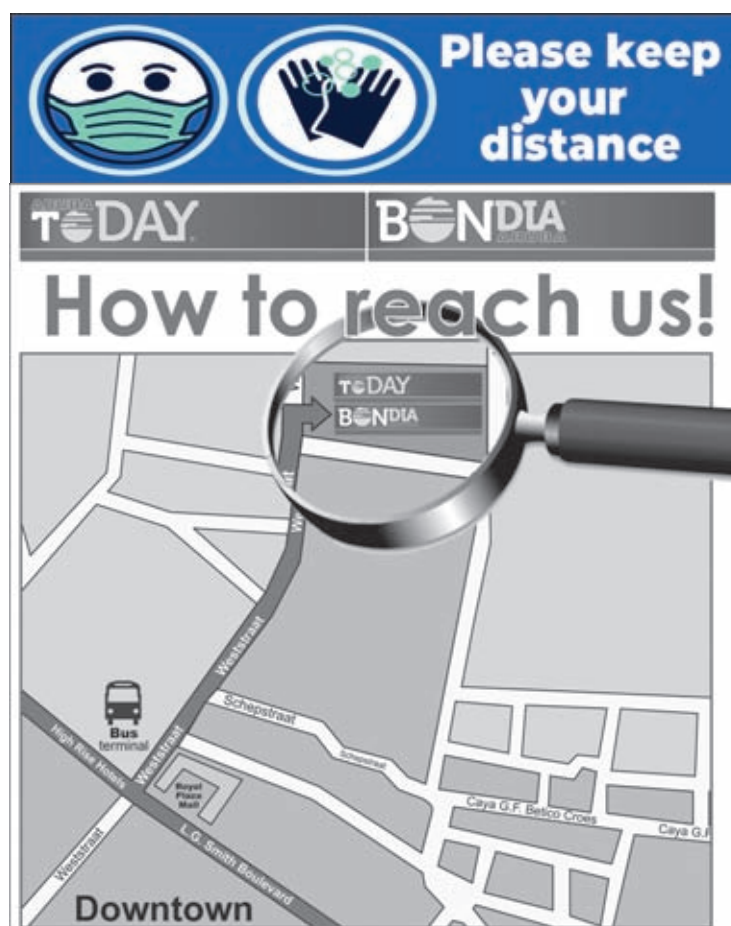
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Happy 100th, bloody mary: Paris marks cocktail's birthday

By ALEX TURNBULL

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Harry's Bar in Paris is celebrating the 100th birthday of the bloody mary, the vodka-tomato juice cocktail believed to have been invented at the iconic watering hole in 1921.

The centenary events this week bring a welcome respite from winter gloom and worries about the omicron variant of the coronavirus. The bar is carefully checking COVID-19 health passes as foreign visitors gather to sample the drink closely associated with Harry's Bar, whose patrons over the past century have included writers Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. According to the history of Harry's, bartender Fernand Petiot invented the cocktail, and the recipe was first published in a book called "Harry's ABC of Cocktails" in 1921. The bar serves an estimated 12,000 bloody marys a year.

"It's a classic drink," bartender Dante Agnelli said while demonstrating the mixology behind the drink, ingredient by ingredient: salt and pepper, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, vodka and tomato juice.

"You make it directly in the glass," Agnelli said as he



Bartender Antoine prepares a Bloody Mary cocktail at Harry's Bar in Paris, Friday, Dec. 10, 2021. Harry's Bar in Paris is celebrating the 100th birthday of the Bloody Mary, the vodka-tomato juice cocktail believed to have been invented in the iconic bar in 1921.

stood at the counter where Petiot first performed the now well-established ritual 100 years ago, at the dawn of what became known as the roaring 1920s.

Harry's Bar plans to host a celebration on Thursday night despite concerns about the spread of omicron variant of the coronavirus in Europe and a surge in new virus infections across France.

Franz-Arthur MacElhone, a great-grandson of bar

founder Harry MacElhone, said the celebration would take place in line with government regulations: the health passes of patrons from around the world will be checked, hand sanitizers will be distributed, and bar staff will wear masks.

In recent days, the French government expanded the places where passes are required, including all restaurants and a growing number of events and venues. To get one, people

must show proof of full vaccination, a negative virus test less than 24 hours old, or recent recovery from COVID-19. The French government closed nightclubs and tightened social distancing measures but is trying to avoid a new lockdown. The health protocol is the only visible change inside the bar that used to be located on New York's 7th Avenue before it was dismantled, shipped to Europe and rebuilt in central

Paris in 1911.

For Harry's patrons, the timeless décor is a reassuring fixture, particularly at a time of uncertainty due to the pandemic. "Once you walk in, you leave all your worries aside," said Ihab Hassan, 61, a retired businessman from Egypt and a regular at the bar since the 1970s. The coronavirus pandemic was not enough to get in the way of his favorite Paris pastime, Hassan said with a bloody mary on the counter in front of him. Sitting next to Hassan were an American, Jay Sing, and an Australian, Renée DiGeorgio. They shared their thoughts on the famous cocktail with an Associated Press reporter, acknowledging they had already consumed a few.

"Sometimes, with breakfast, for my hangover, we drink bloody marys," said DiGeorgio, 42, who works in the mining industry and is based in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"This is a really nice bloody mary," he said. "It's actually the first time I've ever drunk a bloody mary when the sun's down!"

All three men said they took the necessary health precautions to be safe and in compliance with government anti-virus regulations. □

Penelope Cruz honored by MoMA for her career in cinema



Penelope Cruz attends the MoMA Film Benefit presented by CHANEL honoring Penelope Cruz at the Museum of Modern Art on Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

By CLAUDIA TORRENS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — During

a tribute to her career at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), Pe-

nelope Cruz recalled the Betamax videotape store that opened in her neighborhood, in a suburb of Madrid, when she was a child and that made her discover cinema.

It was there where she rented all the films of Spanish movie director Pedro Almodóvar, she said.

"I watched, and I laughed, I cried, and I learned," she said at a star-studded benefit Tuesday evening at the museum. "I would not be here tonight, being honored by MoMA, if I had not had the privilege of working with brilliant directors who have inspired me, taught me, helped me grow as an artist and as a person. I want to thank them all to-

night, and specially my Pedro."

The recognition comes a decade after the museum paid the same tribute to Almodóvar, who has worked with Cruz in seven films. The latest movie by the director, "Parallel Mothers," starring Cruz, opens in the United States on December 24. On Monday, it received two Golden Globe nominations.

An exciting moment of the night was when Almodóvar sent a video message to Cruz, congratulating her on the recognition.

He recalled in the video a dialogue with the actress that they had when they promoted "All About My Mother" (1999).

"You told me that when I get old you will take care of me. I'm not that old yet, but I hope you keep your word," he said, provoking laughter in the audience. "When I am an old man, I hope you come and become, in this case, my mother. It would be a reflection of all the mothers that you have been for me throughout these seven films."

Among those paying tribute to the Spanish actress at the annual film benefit was Anne Hathaway, Diane Kruger and Rebecca Hall. Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin, Spanish singer Rosalía and fashion designer Zac Posen also didn't miss the event. □

Congress asks NFL about Daniel Snyder's probe interference

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two members of Congress who already asked the NFL for transparency about a probe into sexual harassment and other improper conduct at the Washington Football Team are now asking the league to provide evidence of club owner Daniel Snyder's interference with the investigation. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a New York Democrat who is chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, made their latest request Tuesday. This comes after a report posted on The Washington Post's website said "lawyers and private investigators working on Snyder's behalf took steps that potential witnesses ... viewed as attempts to interfere with the NFL's investigation."

"While Mr. Snyder publicly stated that he wanted independent investigators to



Washington Football Team owner Daniel Snyder looks on before an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Sunday, Nov. 3, 2019, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

ferret out the truth, today's reporting suggests that he was privately trying to obstruct the efforts of the very investigator he hired in an effort to conceal damaging information," Maloney said in a news release issued

by the Oversight Committee's majority staff. "These disturbing revelations have only strengthened the Committee's commitment to uncovering the truth in this matter."

Krishnamoorthi said: "Snyder will stop at nothing. To

get to the bottom of this story, (the) NFL must immediately turn over all evidence of Snyder's interference and the other documents we requested over a month ago."

Associated Press

Maloney and Krishnamoorthi sent a letter to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Oct. 21 seeking all documents and communication related to the probe.

On Nov. 5, the pair of representatives urged the NFL and the Washington Football Team to release individuals from non-disclosure agreements that would prevent them from discussing sexual harassment and workplace issues at the club.

The team hired lawyer Beth Wilkinson in 2020 to look into allegations of sexual harassment and other workplace misconduct at the organization.

The league later took over that investigation and fined Washington \$10 million in July 2021, saying the culture at the club was "toxic" and ownership and senior officials paid little attention to sexual harassment and other workplace issues.

The NFL said there was no written report of Wilkinson's inquiry. □

Hamilton receives knighthood days after losing F1 title

WINDSOR, England (AP) — Lewis Hamilton picked up a new title only days after losing one on the track. The seven-time Formula One champion received a knighthood on Wednesday at Windsor Castle but declined to speak to the media afterward.

In a controversial finish on Sunday, Max Verstappen won his first world championship at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix with a pass of Hamilton on the final lap of a riveting season. It denied Hamilton a record-breaking eighth title.

Hamilton gets the honorary title of "Sir" after being knighted by the Prince of Wales for services to motorsports.

The 36-year-old Briton was joined by his mother, Carmen Lockhart. When congratulated on his award, Hamilton said: "Thank you."

Three other F1 drivers have been knighted: Jack Brabham, Stirling Moss and



Lewis Hamilton poses for the media after he was made a Knight Bachelor by Britain's Prince Charles during an investiture ceremony at Windsor Castle in Windsor, England, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021.

Associated Press

Jackie Stewart. Hamilton is the first to be awarded while still competing in the

sport. The Mercedes driver had been seeking his fifth consecutive title and eighth overall to move one ahead of Michael Schumacher. The deployment of the safety car after a late crash at the Yas Marina Circuit wiped out the lead Hamilton had built over his Red Bull rival, and Verstappen had the late advantage because he was using fresher tires.

Mercedes filed protests immediately after the finish but they were rejected.

The FIA said Tuesday a "detailed analysis and clarification exercise" will take place to draw lessons and provide clarity "to preserve the competitive nature of our sport."

The body said the incidents on Sunday have "generated significant misunderstanding and reactions from Formula 1 teams, drivers and fans, an argument that is currently tarnishing the image of the championship." □

Packers back on top of AP Pro32 poll; Bucs, Pats follow

By **SIMMI BUTTAR**

AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After another dominating win, Aaron Rodgers still owns the Chicago Bears.

Another thing his team owns: the top spot in the latest AP Pro32 poll for the first time in a month.

The Green Bay Packers earned five of the 12 first-place votes for 375 points in balloting Tuesday by media members who regularly

cover the NFL.

The Packers gained a spot in the poll and currently have the top seed in the NFC going into Week 15 and the final month of the regular season. They beat the Bears 45-30 on Sunday night for their sixth consecutive victory over their longtime rival.

"Aaron Rodgers still owns the Bears, and the Packers are in the driver's seat for home-field advantage

throughout the NFC playoffs," Newsday's Bob Glauber said.

"Since his Week 1 clunker against the Saints, Rodgers has 27 touchdowns, two interceptions and a great shot at a second straight MVP."

Despite having more first-place votes than the Packers, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are No. 2 in the poll. The Bucs also moved up a spot after their 33-27 over-



Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers reacts after an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021, in Green Bay, Wis. The Packers won 45-30.
Associated Press

time win over the Buffalo Bills on Sunday. The Bucs have six first-place votes for 370 points.

The New England Patriots, coming off a bye, earned the remaining first-place vote as they climbed one place to No. 3. The Patriots currently have the No. 1 seed in the AFC and will look to extend their seven-game win streak on Saturday night when they head to Indianapolis to take on the Colts.

The surging Kansas City Chiefs, who have won six in a row, moved up one spot to No. 4 after routing the Las Vegas Raiders. The Chiefs will open Week 15 on the road when they face the Los Angeles Chargers on Thursday night. The Chargers, in second place in the AFC West, moved up three spots to No. 9.

The Arizona Cardinals, who were No. 1, dropped all the way down to No. 5 after losing 30-23 on Monday night to the Los Angeles Rams. The Rams' win lifted them four spots to No. 6 and they trail the Cards by just a game in the division. The NFC East-leading Dallas Cowboys moved up a spot to No. 7 after topping Washington on Sunday.

Despite blanking the lowly Jacksonville Jaguars 20-0, the Tennessee Titans dropped two spots No. 8.

"The Titans are 9-4 and two inexplicable losses away from the top seed in the AFC," said Rick Gosselin of Talk of Fame Network. □

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